MEMO

DATE: May 5, 2005

TO: Energy and Environment Committee

FROM: Daniel E. Griset, Sr. Regional Planner, X895, griset@scag.ca.gov

SUBJECT: Regional Comprehensive Plan and the Water Chapter

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff invites feedback from the Committee regarding the proposed content themes for the Chapter.

SUMMARY:

Key policies have been analyzed for thematic content and the following issues have been identified for development in the Water Policy Chapter of the Regional Comprehensive Plan:

- the creation of environmentally sustainable communities;
- the management of stormwater and urban runoff pollution;
- interagency collaboration and initiatives within shared watersheds;
- the development of new local water resources and infrastructure;
- the expansion of current water conservation programs;
- the on-going availability of imported supplemental water supplies;
- the increased use of water markets and transfers;
- the development of improved water treatment technologies;
- the increased coordination of policy and resources among all levels of government.

BACKGROUND:

Clean and reliable water in the SCAG region is essential to the future quality of life in our growing region. The projected growth in population and jobs is certain to increase the water challenges the region will face in the coming years. These challenges include the creation of environmentally sustainable communities, the management of stormwater and urban runoff pollution, interagency collaboration and initiatives within shared watersheds, the development of new local water resources and infrastructure, the expansion of current water conservation programs, the on-going availability of imported supplemental water supplies, the increased use of water markets and transfers, the development of improved water treatment technologies and the increased coordination of policy and resources among all levels of government.

Regional policies have been adopted by the Regional Council to address these challenges. These range from the Council's consideration of significant regional water issues to adopted mitigation measures identified in the Programmatic Environmental Impact Reports of past Regional Transportation Plans. In general, these policies have focused on improving regional environmental quality and best management practices, cost-effective watershed pollution controls and reliable water supplies for growing urban communities. These themes will be developed in the coming draft of the Water Chapter in the Regional Comprehensive Plan.

These water policy and issue themes will include the following kinds of discussion:

The creation of environmentally sustainable communities: Water quality and water supply are influenced by the design elements used in planning and creating new communities. Compact development designs that reduce impervious surfaces and increase natural areas not only allow for natural runoff purification treatment, but also save stormwater for groundwater infiltration.

The management of stormwater and urban runoff pollution: Water quality regulators are issuing increasingly stringent rules to reduce local stormwater and urban runoff pollution. These regulations apply to individual jurisdictions and, by various studies, are expected to be very costly mandates for local agencies in the SCAG region. Based on SCAG's historic interest in "areawide waste treatment management planning", regional policy emphasizes the need for watershed-scale planning (a new way of describing "areawide planning") and implementation of pollution control measures. This scale of environmental management is expected to bring needed improvements on a much more cost-effective basis that from individual projects in each local jurisdiction. This same approach offers Caltrans and other regional transportation agencies new ways to reduce their runoff management costs.

Interagency collaboration and initiatives within shared watersheds: Water supplies needed for future growth in the region depend on infrastructure and resource collaboration within each of the watersheds of the region. Too often the agencies that manage water supplies have restricted their planning and activities to only their own service areas, limiting their ability to plan more comprehensively. The same concerns apply to the need for collaboration among agencies impacted by water quality regulations within a watershed.

The development of new local water resources and infrastructure: Because of recent state legislation, the region's future growth is now linked with water supplies. This growth, both infill and otherwise, will place new strains on the current water infrastructure. In some cases it will require retrofitting and replacing old systems; in others it will require extending systems to serve new customers. This infrastructure challenge ranges from system plumbing to water management practices and flexibility.

The expansion of current water conservation programs: Water conservation is an indispensable element in the ability of our growing region to achieve needed water reliability. There is a consumption parallel between agricultural water use in the state and in residential landscape irrigation: agriculture consumes about 80 percent of the state's water supply and residential landscape irrigation consumes about 80 percent of the household water supply. New irrigation practices and technology can reduce this outside use, along with changes in plant selection that

work well with native, drought-tolerant conditions. Installation of water-saving devices and appliances in new and existing residences is another important conservation opportunity.

The on-going availability of imported supplemental water supplies: Imported water supplies are increasingly constrained by competing claims and environmental considerations. These concerns raise the importance of the CalFed Bay-Delta Program, the water supply impacts from habitat and other ecological activities throughout the state and other complex management and planning issues related to the Colorado River.

The increased use of water markets and transfers: The development of markets for the transfer of water between different basins is an important factor for improving the region's water reliability and for improving water quality in the region's water supplies. The ability of water agencies in the region to acquire surplus water from other areas encourages the development of more ambitious groundwater storage programs and makes possible the advantages of conjunctive water use.

The development of improved water treatment technologies: Current water treatment technologies are chemical and energy-intensive. Along with pollution source controls and natural treatment systems, new technological development needs to be encouraged that reduces the heavy reliance on these factors and minimizes by-products that impair the resulting water supplies. New treatment breakthroughs can also contribute to needed increases in water reclamation and reuse throughout the region, especially in the management and use of groundwater basins.

The increased coordination of policy and resources among all levels of government: With a flexible water policy and resources infrastructure, comprehensive watershed-scale solutions and creative regional governance, water supply and water quality challenges can be met. Cost considerations are always important in meeting these challenges, but policy and program coordination can forge influential coalitions, reduce costs and improve the potentials for success.

Summary of Water Policy Statements and Revision Recommendations

March 28, 2005
Regional Comprehensive Plan Task Force

	Policy Statement from 1996 Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide	Staff Revision Recommendations
1	Encourage planned development in locations least likely to cause environmental impact.	Encourage planned development to use designs that minimize structural footprints and maximize non-impervious surfaces.
2	The population, housing, and jobs forecasts, which are adopted by SCAG's Regional Council and that reflect local plans and policies, shall be used by SCAG in all phases of implementation and review.	NA
3	In areas with large seasonal population fluctuations, such as resort areas, forecast permanent populations. However, appropriate infrastructure systems should be sized to serve high season population totals.	OK
4	Encourage patterns of urban development and land use, which reduce costs on infrastructure construction and make better use of existing facilities.	OK
5	Support the protection of vital resources such as wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, woodlands, production lands, and land containing unique and endangered plants and animals.	Support the protection and expansion of open spaces such as wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, woodlands and other valuable watershed habitat.
6	Develop well-managed viable ecosystems or known habitats of rare, threatened and endangered species, including wetlands.	See 5 above.
7	Streamline water quality regulatory implementation. Identify and eliminate overlaps with other regulatory programs to reduce economic impacts on local businesses.	Encourage coordination between water quality regulations and other regulatory programs to minimize economic impacts on local agencies and businesses.
8	Encourage "watershed management" programs and strategies, recognizing the primary role of local governments in such efforts.	OK
9	Encourage opportunities for pollution reduction marketing and other market-incentive water quality programs as an alternative to strict command-and-control regulation.	OK
10	Clean up the contamination in the region's major groundwater aquifers since its water supply is critical to the long-term economic and environmental health of the region. The financing of such clean-ups should leverage state and federal resources and minimize significant impacts on the local economy.	Clean up of groundwater contamination is an essential step in developing new regional water storage, as well as improving the long-term environmental and economic health of the region. Clean up financing should leverage state and federal resources to minimize significant impacts on the local economy.
11	Encourage water reclamation throughout the region where it is cost-effective, feasible, and appropriate to reduce reliance on imported water and wastewater discharges. Current administrative impediments to increased use of wastewater should be addressed.	Encourage water reclamation throughout the region where it is a cost-effective and feasible way to reduce reliance on imported water. Impediments to the reuse of highly treated wastewater should be addressed and minimized.
12	Ensure wastewater treatment agency facility planning and facility development be consistent with population projections contained in the RCPG, while taking into account the need to build wastewater treatment facilities in cost-effective increments of capacity, the need to build well enough in advance to reliably meet unanticipated service and storm water demands, and the need to provide standby capacity for public safety and environmental protection objectives.	Encourage the planning and delivery of wastewater treatment capacity in the region that is sufficient to meet future service demands and to accommodate the treatment of urban runoff and other flows that may create water quality impairments.

	Policy Statement from 1996 Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide	Staff Revision Recommendations
13	Coordinate watershed management planning at the subregional level by (1) providing consistent regional data; (2) serving as a liaison between affected local, state, and federal watershed management agencies; and (3) ensuring that watershed planning is consistent with other planning objectives (e.g., transportation, air quality, water supply).	Encourage watershed management initiatives within the subwatersheds of the region by (1) providing appropriate regional data; (2) facilitating collaboration between local, state, and federal stakeholders; and (3) ensuring that these initiatives are consistent with other regional priorities (e.g., transportation, air quality, water supply).
14	The timing, financing, and location of public facilities, utility systems, and transportation systems shall be used by SCAG to implement the region's growth policies.	NA
15	Provide, as appropriate, legislative support and advocacy of regional water conservation, supply and water quality projects.	Provide, as appropriate, legislative and advocacy support of regional water conservation and supply projects, as well as comprehensive and cost-effective water quality initiatives.
16	Work with local jurisdictions and water quality agencies, through its Water Policy Task Force and other means, to encourage regional-scale planning for improved water quality management and pollution prevention. Future impacts to water quality shall be avoided through cooperative planning, information sharing and comprehensive pollution control measure	In conjunction with the Water Policy Task Force, support local entities and water quality agencies in creating integrated subwatershed implementation plans to improve regional water quality and prevent impairments caused by urban runoff pollution.
17	Work with local jurisdictions and water agencies, through its Water Policy Task Force and other means, including the update of the Water Quality and Water Resources chapters for SCAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide, to encourage regional-scale planning for improved stormwater management and groundwater recharge. Future adverse impacts shall be avoided through cooperative planning, information sharing, and comprehensive implementation efforts within the SCAG region. SCAG's Water Policy Task Force offers an opportunity for local jurisdictions and water agencies to share information and strategies for improving regional performance in these efforts.	These points appear elsewhere in this inventory.
18	Encourage wastewater treatment agencies to have expansion plans, approvals and financing in place once their facilities are operating at 80 percent of capacity. Through the update to the Water Quality and Water Resources chapters of SCAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide, SCAG shall provide opportunities for information sharing and program development.	The main points are treated elsewhere in this inventory.
19	Facilitate local water agencies' informing local jurisdictions of their continued efforts to evaluate future water demands and establish the necessary supply and infrastructure, as documented in their Urban Water Management Plans to meet projected demand in 2030.	Facilitate communications and information sharing between local entities and water agencies, as needed, in order to support the preparation of updates to Urban Water Management Plans throughout the region.
20	Facilitate information-sharing about water policy-related regional coordination throughout California and the Colorado River Basin that develops and supports sustainable growth policies.	Facilitate information sharing among local agencies to ensure that the region's reliance on external water supplies is coordinated with other water policies to support sustainable growth of the region.
21	Minimize impacts to water supply by developing incentives, education and policies to further encourage water conservation and thereby reduce demand.	Support incentives, public education and other policies that encourage residential water conservation and improve local water resources.

	Policy Statement from 1996 Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide	Staff Revision Recommendations
22	Involve the region's water supply agencies in planning efforts in order to make water resource information, such as water supply and water quality, location of recharge areas and groundwater, and other useful information available to local jurisdictions for use in their land use planning and decisions.	Provide information and other appropriate resources to water agencies and local watershed entities to support improved resource management decision making.
23	Promote water-efficient land use development.	Encourage local land use agencies to adopt water-wise development policies.
24	Develop strategies to accommodate growth that use resources efficiently, eliminate pollution and significantly reduce waste.	Encourage growth strategies that use resources efficiently, eliminate pollution and significantly reduce waste.
25	Supports plan for the historic use of surplus water to be addressed with a combination of water transfers as the result of conservation in the agricultural sectors and a reasonable wheeling cost that facilitates water transfers but does not result in cost shifting or a reduction in water service reliability for non-participating agencies.	Encourage water management policies that emphasize stewardship principles, favor responsible water transfers from agricultural to urban communities, and strengthens regional water reliability.
26	Supports only the use of the best available technology including monitoring, air, and water impacts for locating any nuclear waste facility.	NA
27	Supports Proposition 204 to secure federal funds for Delta restoration as described by CALFED.	Support a CALFED program with appropriate balances between its urban, agricultural and environmental priorities and with balanced cost sharing among the program beneficiaries.